

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for distributing program content in a network, said network comprising ~~[[a]]~~ an origin server for providing said program content, a client operable for communicating with said origin server across said network, and a caching server operable for storing a copy of said program content distributed by said origin server, said method comprising:

establishing a rule defining whether said client is entitled to receive said program content;

storing said rule on said network;

allowing said client to request said program content from said origin server of said network;

using the caching server to ~~comparing~~ compare said rule to a record describing at least one entitlement characteristic of said client, wherein said at least one entitlement characteristic comprises data for use by the caching server to authenticate said client so as to determine whether said client is entitled to receive said program content before ~~distributing~~ authorizing the distribution of a key to said client for decrypting said program content wherein said caching server stores a copy of said program content originally provided to said network by said origin server; and

multicasting said program content ~~through use of said~~ by the caching server.

2. (Original) The method as described in claim 1 wherein said rule is comprised of a method of payment.
3. (Original) The method as described in claim 1 wherein said rule is comprised of a subscription identifier.
4. (Original) The method as described in claim 1 wherein said rule is comprised of a restriction based on the location of where said program content is to be delivered.
5. (Original) The method as described in claim 1 wherein said rule is comprised of a restriction based on a content rating for a user.
6. (Original) The method as described in claim 1, wherein said at least one entitlement characteristic comprises information indicating a physical location of said client.
7. (Original) The method as described in claim 1, wherein said at least one entitlement characteristic comprises information indicating at least one service subscribed to by said client.
8. (Original) The method as described in claim 1, wherein said at least one entitlement characteristic comprises data for use in authenticating said client with said caching server.
9. (Original) The method as described in claim 1, wherein said at least one entitlement characteristic is stored by said client in a ticket.
10. (Original) The method as described in claim 1, wherein said at least one entitlement characteristic is communicated from said client to said caching server.

11. (Original) The method as described in claim 1 and further comprising not permitting said client to alter said at least one entitlement characteristic.

12. (Original) The method as described in claim 1 and further comprising encrypting said at least one entitlement characteristic so as to prevent said client from altering said at least one entitlement characteristic.

13. (Original) The method as described in claim 1 wherein said multicasting said program content is begun before said comparing said rule to said record describing said at least one entitlement characteristic of said client.

14. (Currently Amended) A method for distributing program content in a network, said network comprising [[a]] an origin server for storing program content, a client operable for communicating with said origin server across said network, and a caching server operable for storing a copy of said program content distributed by said origin server, said method comprising:

establishing a rule defining whether said client is entitled to receive said program content;

allowing said client to request said program content from said origin server;

receiving at said origin server a request from said client for said program content; and

formatting a data record comprising an identifier to identify to the caching server said program content and said rule for said program content, the rule for use by the caching server to determine whether said client is entitled to receive said program content.

15. (Original) The method as described in claim 14 and further comprising:
authenticating said data record.

16. (Original) The method as described in claim 14 and further comprising:
signing said data record so as to allow said caching server to authenticate
said data record.

17. (Currently Amended) The method as described in claim 16 wherein said
authenticating said data record comprises:
utilizing a trusted third party to provide an authentication key to said
origin server for use in signing said data record and a verification key to said caching server for
use in authenticating said data record.

18. (Original) The method as described in claim 14 and further comprising:
conveying said data record to said client.

19. (Original) The method as described in claim 14 and further comprising:
signing said data record; and
conveying said signed data record to said client.

20. (Original) The method as described in claim 14 and further comprising:
signing said data record;
conveying said signed data record to said client; and
conveying said signed data record to said caching server from said client.

21. (Currently Amended) The method as described in claim 14 and further
comprising:
signing said data record; and
conveying said signed data record to said caching server from said origin
server.

22. (Original) The method as described in claim 14 and further comprising:
signing said data record;
conveying said signed data record to said client;
conveying said signed data record to said caching server from said client;
conveying an identifier identifying said program content from said client
to said caching server;
authenticating said data record at said caching server;
allowing said caching server to determine whether said client is entitled to
receive said program content.

23. (Currently Amended) A method of distributing program content in a
network, said network comprising [[a]] an origin server, a client operable for communicating
with said origin server across said network, and a caching server operable for storing a copy of
said program content distributed by said origin server, said method comprising:
receiving at the caching server a data record for said client for use in
determining whether said client is entitled to said program content;
receiving at the caching server a rule associated with said program content
for use by said caching server so as to determine whether said client is entitled to said program
content;
utilizing said data record and said rule so as to determine by the caching
server whether said client is entitled to said program content; and
multicasting from the caching server said program content.

24. (Currently Amended) The method as described in claim 23 and further
comprising:
conveying said program ~~material~~ content to said client.

25. (Currently Amended) The method as described in claim 23 and further comprising:

decrypting said data record with a key received from a trusted third party, wherein said trusted third party is a trusted third party for said caching server and said origin server.

26. (Original) The method as described in claim 23 wherein said receiving said data record for said client comprises:

receiving said data record from said client.